Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

AMENDMENT

Please make the following amendments:

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

At page 31, please delete lines 6-27.

At page 7, after line 7, please insert the following:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

Figure l: HPLC profile of the Endo-Lys digest.

Figure 2: Immunodot of HPLC fractions with 5 patients sera and 1 control serum.

Figure 3: Immunodot of the C-terminal peptide (C-term mod) and without (C-term nt mod) dimethylarginine, and of the recombinant (baculo SmD, coli SmD) and natural protein (native). Strips were incubated with a anti-SmD positive serum (+) and a control serum (-). Total protein staining (Aurodyne) was performed on the third strip.

Figure 4: LIA with modified (dimethyl arginine) C terminal peptide (fraction 15 from EndoLys-C digest, line 1 on the strip), and non-modified C terminal peptide (fraction 8 from the EndoLys-C digest, line 2 on the strip), both applied in equal amounts (60 ng). Additionally, 7, 15 and 30 ng of recombinant SmDl from baculovirus- or E. Coli-infected insect cells (resp. 4,5,6 and 7,8,9) as well as 15 and 30 ng of a mixture of gel-purified SmD (native) were applied to the strips. The total protein staining (Aurodyne) was performed on the first strip. The strips were incubated with (A) a panel of anti-SmD positive sera selected by INNO-LIA ANA from ANF-positive sera, (B) a panel of anti-SmD positive sera selected by INNO-LIA ANA from a cohort of SLE patients diagnosed according to the ACR criteria, (C) sera selected from MCTD patients (control panel) and (D) sera selected from ANF- negative sera (control panel). No reactivity was observed with sera from the control panels.